

CHAPTER SEVEN

GOLDEN HOUR BY CAIT NISHIMURA

Year of Composition: 2020

Duration: ~6 minutes

Movements: Single Movement

Range: F3 - A5

Instrumentation: Trumpet in Bb and Optional Flugelhorn, Piano

Composer Biographical Background:

Cait Nishimura is a Japanese Canadian composer, song writer, and music educator known for her nature-inspired works. She is in demand as a composer for wind band literature, having won the Canadian Band Association's Composition Prize in 2017. Nishimura's goal is to write approachable and enjoyable contemporary music. Her works have been presented at international conferences and festivals including the Midwest Clinic and MusicFest Canada. Nishimura self-publishes all of her own music under Cait Nishimura Music.⁷⁹

Nishimura's interest in music began in her childhood, with an early love for singing in her school choir and an interest in playing the piano. She began playing the clarinet in her school's band and was particularly excited when she was able to switch to the bass clarinet. In eleventh grade, she composed a work for wind ensemble and was given the opportunity by her teachers to conduct the piece in a concert. She remembers this as a significant moment in her career, sparking her continued passion for composing.⁸⁰

Nishimura earned her Bachelor of Music and her Bachelor of Education degrees from the University of Toronto. She enjoyed learning the rest of the wind band instruments for her music

⁷⁹“Cait Nishimura Music,” Cait Nishimura, 2022, <https://caitnishimura.com/>

⁸⁰Dylan Rook Maddix, interview with Cait Nishimura, *The Band Room Podcast*, podcast audio, September 7, 2019, <https://www.bandroompod.com/ep-7-cait-nishimura>

education classes and she credits this experience with helping her composition skills and contributing to her understanding of the ranges and unique qualities of each instrument. Nishimura's compositional process typically starts with playing the piano and singing while recording her ideas on her phone. She starts with chords and produces a hand-written first edition before continuing the rest of her work on the computer.

Nishimura taught instrumental music before becoming a full-time composer and continues to advocate for music education. Her compositions are popular additions to wind band programs across the world and she enjoys visiting band programs that are working on her music and giving clinics.⁸¹

Overview of Work and Pedagogical Notes:

Golden Hour is an approachable piece that presents few technical and range challenges, allowing the performer to showcase lyrical playing and musical phrasing. Inspired by the last hour of light before sunset,⁸² *Golden Hour* is able to be played on Bb Trumpet alone, or on both trumpet and flugelhorn. The optional flugelhorn section is very brief, making this work well-suited to serve as an introductory flugelhorn piece for students with little to no experience with the instrument.

While the technical demands of the piece are approachable, there are many meter changes, with frequent shifts between 12/8, 9/8, and 7/8 meters, as well as the occasional 4/4 section. There are a couple of instances of hemiola figures, such as in measures 141 and 157, making this piece well-suited for students working to cultivate their rhythmic precision. While the rhythmic considerations can be a challenging factor, the constant driving eighth note pulse throughout triple meter sections in the piano line assists with feeling the meter and creating

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Nishimura, Cait, *Golden Hour*, Cait Nishimura, 2020-21.

direction with the music. The performer can supplement work on the complex meter in Nishimura's piece with etudes from Everett Gates' *Odd Meter Etudes*. Weekly study and performance of an etude from this book can assist with building familiarity and confidence with varying rhythmic figures and emphasized beats.

The opening section of *Golden Hour* features sustained and lyrical playing, with a distinct shift in style at rehearsal A to more upbeat and fast-paced. The directive is "joyful, with ease," and the performer is able to practice conveying the light, bouncy style suggested by the stylistic markings and compound meter groupings while also centering pitch throughout the register of the trumpet and maintaining clear and consistent articulation. Emphasis on playing slurred, simple passages with excellent sound quality, centered pitch, and smoothness is critical in preparation for performing *Golden Hour*. Regular practice of tone-building exercises, such as Vincent Cichowicz's "Flow Studies" and slurred studies from James Stamp's *Warm-Ups + Studies* serves as a crucial prerequisite to work on Nishimura's piece. A strong fundamental sound concept will provide the performer with the necessary skills to bring out musicality and phrasing in this piece with success.

Rehearsal E marks a shift back to a slower, more lyrical style. Much like the opening, the melodic line contains sustained passages which require shaping and direction from the performer. To play this piece truly effectively, the performer must exaggerate the dynamic contrast and be prepared to play at dynamic extremes, especially on the softer side. In the final section, the performer goes from fortissimo to triple piano, with the final note sustained for four full measures while the performer is instructed to fade away from triple piano—a true test of efficiency and finesse.

Golden Hour is similar in potential use and style to Eric Ewazen's *Prayer and Praise* and Joseph Turrin's "Psalm" from *Two Portraits*. With few range or endurance challenges, students are able to focus on quality of sound, musicianship, and playing efficiently. An advanced student can benefit from using this piece as an exercise in making a musical statement, while a less advanced student can approach it as an attainable work to practice playing efficiently, musically, and with rhythmic accuracy. An added benefit of this piece is the potential for it to serve as a brief introduction to flugelhorn, which can also add variety to a recital program. The duration and distinct singing style of *Golden Hour* makes it an ideal short recital work, as well as a suitable jury piece.